

## **Tips for Producing Video Testimonials**

In 2008, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began collecting video testimonials at ENERGY STAR® events across the nation. Each video asked event attendees to “Tell Us How You Save,” and encouraged people to describe the changes they’ve made at home and at work to save energy and help fight global warming. Sharing stories can inspire others to make simple earth-friendly changes, too.

You can collect your own testimonials on video at your event. Read the sections below to understand the style, approach, and best practices for collecting Tell Us How You Save testimonials at events. If you would like to submit your video to EPA for possible broadcast on energystar.gov, e-mail us at [changetheworld@energystar.gov](mailto:changetheworld@energystar.gov). You can also upload videos to ENERGY STAR’s Facebook Fan Page at [www.facebook.com/energystar](http://www.facebook.com/energystar).

To view testimonials from ENERGY STAR’s 2009 events, go to [www.energystar.gov/changetheworld](http://www.energystar.gov/changetheworld) and watch the videos in the carousel player at the bottom of the page.

### **Tone**

The tone of the ENERGY STAR testimonials should be positive, informative, and convey that becoming more energy efficient at home is an attainable goal, reachable by small and manageable steps.

### **Interviewees**

Interviewees should represent the spectrum of people attending your event; therefore, select a variety of age, gender, and ethnicities. Children are often well-informed about saving energy and protecting the environment and can make very good interview subjects.

### **B-roll**

In addition to shooting video testimonials, you’ll want to show the testimonials in the context of your event. Shoot video in and around displays, capture any signs at the event, and include some general crowd scenes. Each of these elements can help establish a mood of excitement and activity in your video.

### **Location**

To make your finished video more dynamic, consider collecting testimonials at several different spots during your event. You’ll want to be able to hear your interviewees clearly above the background noise, so choose your interview locations with this in mind.

If you’re capturing your footage with a video camera that doesn’t accommodate an additional microphone input, choose locations slightly off the beaten path, where background noise isn’t as prominent. If you’re unsure about background noise levels, shoot a minute of footage, plug in your headphones and play your test footage back through the camera.

In choosing your location, you’ll also want to consider visual elements of your background. Try to avoid shooting against blank white walls. Choose locations with colorful backgrounds or shoot your subject with his or her back to the crowd activity.

### **Framing**

To ensure that the interviewees are clearly visible in a small window on a Web page, film your subjects from a distance of just a few feet away. This will also help you to hear them clearly. Ideally, you should be able to see from the middle of their chests to just above the tops of their heads in your viewfinder. All of your subjects should be captured at eye level, so you may have to crouch or kneel when interviewing children.

### **Lighting**

If your interviews are indoors, choose a location that has a lot of ambient light. Light coming from multiple sources around the room is preferable to overhead lighting, which tends to be less flattering for most people. If possible, take advantage of natural light by working near windows. Have your subject stand a few feet away with one shoulder toward the window.

If your event is outdoors, choose a spot where the sun will not be directly in front of or behind your subject. If possible, capture your interviews when the sun isn't directly overhead, such as before 11:00 am and after 2:00 pm.

### **Questions**

Before you start your interview, ask the interviewee to try to answer your questions in complete sentences. Avoid yes-no questions. Ask simple, open-ended questions about how to save energy and protect the environment, and about your event. Sample questions include:

- What do you do around your home to save energy?
- Have you made energy efficiency improvements to your home and if so, what?
- How have you noticed a difference since making those improvements?
- Why is saving energy important?
- Why is protecting the environment important?
- If you were talking to someone who knew nothing about being energy efficient and you could tell them one thing that they could do to make a difference, what would that be?

### **Length**

To maximize variety in your finished video, try to keep all your interviews under 90 seconds. This may seem like a short time, but a wider variety of shorter interviews will help your finished video compilation move at a steady pace and will keep it interesting for the viewer.

### **Release Forms**

To protect your organization, when shooting video to show online, on television, or in other public venues, you must have permission from the people appearing in your video to use their image, likeness, or voice. You can usually secure permission by obtaining a release from them. This can be done with either a video talent release form or through the use of a general release for people to sign at the event. Consult your legal department about releases for your event. Additionally, make sure that you have permission from a parent or guardian before interviewing children.